

Division of Environmental Health

## ***Mercury Quick Reference Guidance Sheet***

1,000 nanograms per cubic meter of air ( $\text{ng}/\text{m}^3$ )  
= 1 microgram per cubic meter of air ( $\text{ug}/\text{m}^3$ )

### **When screening a home, school or business:**

- Check floors, and other suspect surfaces with a mercury vapor analyzer. Compare the readings to those taken in the breathing zone ( about 4 feet off the floor). Do they match? Higher than breathing zone levels on the suspect surface likely indicates a source of mercury (beads) present.
- Bag suspect items such as clothing and shoes in a plastic trash bag, leaving enough headspace for any mercury vapor to accumulate. Let the bag sit at room temperature or warmer for a couple of hours.

### **Occupancy During Clean-up:**

- 10, 000  $\text{ng}/\text{m}^3$  in the breathing zone - The level below which occupants may choose to stay in a dwelling for the duration of a clean up of a reasonable length of time, ( i.e. days vs. weeks). Values greater than 1 but less than 10  $\text{ug}/\text{m}^3$  may require a site-specific plan to minimize exposure for sensitive populations. Keep windows open for adequate fresh air exchanges.

### **Screening Objects:**

- 1,000  $\text{ng}/\text{m}^3$  and above - Porous materials like upholstered furniture, carpeting should be removed and disposed of. Hard surfaces can be cleaned. If valued items are contaminated they can be aired-out outdoors and re-screened several weeks or months afterward.
- Bagged items should be tested immediately upon opening the bag.

Those measuring 10,000  $\text{ng}/\text{m}^3$  and greater: Dispose of appropriately.

Less than 1,000 ng/m<sup>3</sup>: Acceptable to keep

Between 10,000 and 1,000 ng/m<sup>3</sup>: Consider airing out for weeks in a warm, non-living space and re-test before use.

### **Post Clean-up Acceptable Air Clearance Values:**

- **1,000 ng/m<sup>3</sup>** in the breathing zone for residences when all the source mercury and contaminated items has been removed and adequate ventilation has occurred.
- **3,000 ng/m<sup>3</sup>** for non-residential settings, i.e., schools, churches, offices, clinics etc., when all the source mercury and contaminated items has been removed and adequate ventilation has occurred.

**MDCH Technical Support - 1-800-648-6942. Call anytime.**